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Sustainable development: implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

Report of the Second Committee*

Rapporteur: Ms. Denise **McQuade** (Ireland)

I. Introduction

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 53 (see A/64/420). Action on sub-item (e) was taken at the 34th, 35th, 41st and 42nd meetings, on 12 and 17 November and 9 and 11 December 2009. An account of the Committee's consideration of the sub-item is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.2/64/SR.34, 35, 41 and 42).

II. Consideration of proposals

A. Draft resolutions A/C.2/64/L.31 and A/C.2/64/L.67

2. At the 34th meeting, on 12 November, the representative of the Sudan, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, introduced a draft resolution entitled "United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020)" (A/C.2/64/L.31), which read:

> "*The General Assembly*,
>
> "*Recalling* its resolution 58/211 of 23 December 2003, in which it declared 2006 the International Year of Deserts and Desertification,

* The report of the Committee on this item is being issued in 10 parts, under the symbol A/64/420 and Add.1-9.

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"*Recalling also* its resolution 62/195 of 19 December 2007, in which it decided to declare the decade 2010-2020 as the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification, based on the recommendation of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme at its twenty-fourth session,

"*Recalling further* its resolutions 61/202 of 20 December 2006, 62/193 of 19 December 2007, 63/218 of 19 December 2008 and other resolutions relating to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

"*Recalling* the 2005 World Summit Outcome,

"*Deeply concerned* about the worsening situation of desertification in all regions, particularly in Africa, and its far-reaching implications for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the eradication of poverty and ensuring environmental sustainability,

"*Responding* to the call of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa at its ninth session for the implementation of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification,

"*Determined* to build upon the momentum and to boost the spirit of international solidarity generated by the designation of 2006 as the International Year of Deserts and Desertification,

"*Committed* to raising the awareness of desertification, land degradation and drought at all levels,

"1. *Recalls* its decision to declare the decade 2010-2020 as the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification;

"2. *Designates* the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa as the focal point of the Decade, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and other relevant bodies of the United Nations, including the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat;

"3. *Invites* all Member States to periodically commemorate the Decade by arranging appropriate activities;

"4. *Encourages* Members States and multilateral agencies in a position to do so to support the secretariat of the Convention financially and technically, with a view to supporting special initiatives in observance of the Decade and the goal of enhancing the implementation of the Convention and its ten-year strategic plan for the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018);

"5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session on the status of the implementation of the present resolution."

3. At its 41st meeting, on 9 December, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled "United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020)" (A/C.2/64/L.67), submitted by the Rapporteur on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/64/L.31.

4. At the same meeting, upon the proposal of the Chairperson, the Committee agreed to waive rule 120 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.2/64/L.67.

5. Also at the same meeting, the Committee was informed that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

6. Also at its 41st meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/64/L.67 (see para. 14, draft resolution I).

7. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/64/L.67, draft resolution A/C.2/64/L.31 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

B. Draft resolutions A/C.2/64/L.36 and A/C.2/64/L.71

8. At the 35th meeting, on 17 November, the representative of the Sudan, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa" (A/C.2/64/L.36), which read:

"*The General Assembly*,

"*Recalling* its resolutions 58/211 of 23 December 2003, 61/202 of 20 December 2006, 62/193 of 19 December 2007, 63/218 of 19 December 2008 and other resolutions relating to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

"*Acknowledging* that desertification, land degradation and drought are global problems requiring global action,

"*Welcoming* the decision adopted in Sirte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, on 3 July 2009 by the Assembly of the African Union at its Thirteenth Ordinary Session authorizing the African Union to accede to the Convention,

"*Concerned* by the negative impacts that desertification, land degradation, loss of biodiversity and climate change have on each other, and recognizing the potential benefits of complementarities in addressing these problems in a mutually supportive manner,

"*Welcoming* the decisions of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventeenth session regarding desertification and drought,

"*Concerned* that extreme desertification and land degradation processes also affect a quarter of the Latin American and Caribbean region as well as Asia, increasing the vulnerability of poor communities and compromising food security, and that this is a situation which has not been perceived in all its magnitude,

"*Alarmed* by the negative impact on the environment and the economy of the increasing frequency and severity of dust/sandstorms affecting semi-arid regions,

"*Acknowledging* the Convention to Combat Desertification as one of the tools for poverty eradication, and reiterating its resolve to eradicate extreme poverty, promote sustainable development and improve the livelihoods of people affected by drought and/or desertification, taking into account the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018),

"*Recognizing* the need for greater investment in sustainable land management, and emphasizing the need for the full implementation of the ten-year strategic plan and framework,

"*Noting* that the ten-year strategic plan and framework highlights the importance of the development and implementation of scientifically based and sound methods for monitoring and assessing desertification,

"*Recognizing* the need to strengthen the scientific basis underpinning the Convention, and noting the instruction given by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, at its eighth session, to the Committee on Science and Technology to conduct its future sessions in a predominantly scientific conference-style format, addressing specified themes,

"*Expressing its deep appreciation* to the Government of Argentina for hosting the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Buenos Aires from 21 September to 2 October 2009,

"*Welcoming* the offer of the Government of the Republic of Korea to host the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Gyeongnam Province in the autumn of 2011,

"1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa;

"2. *Welcomes* the outcome of the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and its policy recommendations, particularly those related to strengthening the institutional framework for policy implementation, implementing practical measures to combat land degradation and desertification, and enhancing capacity-building, transfer of technology and financing;

"3. *Invites* Member States to continue to integrate plans and strategies related to drought, desertification and land degradation into their national development strategies;

"4. *Invites* Member States to promote and implement effective national, regional and global drought information, forecasting and early warning systems that disseminate reliable information for communities living in drought-prone regions, to enable them to take appropriate and proactive measures, with adequate support from their respective Governments, relevant

institutions, such as new and existing drought observatories, and the international community;

"5. *Supports* the improvement of existing and the establishment of new centres of excellence and monitoring in developing countries to combat desertification and promote capacity-building to adopt and implement, inter alia, integrated techniques for the conservation of natural resources and their sustainable use, and invites regional and international programmes and funds, as well as donors, to provide support to affected countries in their endeavours to combat desertification;

"6. *Calls* for the promotion of sustainable management of soil as one means of mitigating the effects of drought;

"7. *Invites* Member States and relevant organizations to cooperate at the global and regional levels with a view to preventing and managing dust/sandstorms, including by sharing related information, forecasting and early warning systems;

"8. *Renews* its call for coherence among United Nations programmes, funds, agencies and entities working on desertification, drought and land issues under the aegis of the secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification;

"9. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Committee on Science and Technology and, in this respect, welcomes the outcome of the first United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Scientific Conference, held in the context of the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, including the agreement on indicators for a rigorous monitoring and assessment of desertification, land degradation and drought trends;

"10. *Welcomes* the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the assessment of the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification as well as the decision of the Conference of the Parties at its ninth session requesting the Bureau to undertake and supervise an evaluation of existing and potential reporting, accountability and institutional arrangements for the Global Mechanism and their legal and financial implications, including the possibility of identifying a new institution/organization to house the Global Mechanism, taking into account the scenarios presented in the Joint Inspection Unit assessment of the Global Mechanism and the need to avoid duplication and overlap in the work of the secretariat and the Global Mechanism and also requesting the Bureau to present to the Conference of the Parties at its tenth session a report on that evaluation for consideration and decision on the issue of Global Mechanism reporting, accountability and institutional arrangements;

"11. *Requests* all States parties to the Convention to promote awareness among local populations, particularly women, youth and civil society organizations, of, and to include them in, the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan and framework, and encourages affected States parties and donors to take into account the issue of participation of civil society in Convention processes when setting priorities in national development strategies, in conformity with the comprehensive communication strategy adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its ninth session;

"12. *Invites* developed country parties to the Convention and other donors to the Global Environment Facility to provide, in the fifth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility Trust Fund, resources that are a significant increase from the current level in order to allow the Facility to fully implement targeted activities in all focal areas, in particular that of land degradation;

"13. *Welcomes* the ongoing efforts of the Executive Secretary of the Convention to continue the administrative renewal and reform of the secretariat and to realign its functions in order to fully implement the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit and bring those functions into line with the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018);

"14. *Decides* to include in the United Nations calendar of conferences and meetings for the biennium 2010-2011 the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies envisaged for the biennium;

"15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to make provisions for the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies in his proposal for the programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011;

"16. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-fifth session the sub-item entitled 'Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa';

"17. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, including a report on the implementation of the Convention."

9. At its 42nd meeting, on 11 December, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa" (A/C.2/64/L.71), submitted by the Rapporteur on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/64/L.36.

10. At the same meeting, the Secretary of the Committee read out a statement of programme budget implications with regard to draft resolution A/C.2/64/L.71.

11. Also at the same meeting, the Rapporteur orally corrected the fourteenth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution.

12. Also at its 42nd meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/64/L.71 as orally corrected (see para. 14 , draft resolution II).

13. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/64/L.71, draft resolution A/C.2/64/L.36 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

III. Recommendations of the Second Committee

14. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Draft resolution I
United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020)

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 58/211 of 23 December 2003, in which it declared 2006 the International Year of Deserts and Desertification,

Recalling also its resolution 62/195 of 19 December 2007, in which it decided to declare the decade 2010-2020 as the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification, based on the recommendation of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme at its twenty-fourth session,[1]

Recalling further its resolutions 61/202 of 20 December 2006, 62/193 of 19 December 2007 and 63/218 of 19 December 2008 and other resolutions relating to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,[2]

Recalling the 2005 World Summit Outcome,[3]

Deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation of desertification in all regions, particularly in Africa, and its far-reaching implications for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in particular the eradication of poverty and ensuring environmental sustainability,

Responding to the call of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa at its ninth session for the implementation of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification,[4]

Taking into account the success of the 2006 International Year of Deserts and Desertification in raising awareness of desertification, land degradation and drought,

Committed to raising the awareness of desertification, land degradation and drought at all levels, consistent with the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018),[5]

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[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 25* (A/62/25), annex I, decision 24/14; see also General Assembly resolution 61/185 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67.

[2] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

[3] See resolution 60/1.

[4] ICCD/COP (9)/15.

[5] A/C.2/62/7, annex.

1. *Recalls* its decision to declare the decade 2010-2020 as the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification;

2. *Designates* the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa as the focal point of the Decade, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and other relevant bodies of the United Nations, including the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat;

3. *Invites* States parties to the Convention, observers and other relevant stakeholders to organize activities to observe the Decade with the aim of raising awareness of the causes of and solutions to ongoing land degradation and desertification in the framework of the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance implementation of the Convention (2008-2018);[5]

4. *Encourages* Member States and multilateral agencies in a position to do so to support the secretariat of the Convention financially and technically, with a view to supporting special initiatives in observance of the Decade as well as other observance events and activities worldwide;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session on the status of the implementation of the present resolution.

Draft resolution II
Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 58/211 of 23 December 2003, 61/202 of 20 December 2006, 62/193 of 19 December 2007, 63/218 of 19 December 2008 and other resolutions relating to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,[1]

Reasserting its commitment to combating and reversing desertification and land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, consistent with articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Convention, and to mitigating the effects of drought, eradicating extreme poverty, promoting sustainable development and food security and improving the livelihoods of vulnerable people affected by drought and/or desertification, taking into account the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018),

Reaffirming the universal membership of the Convention, and acknowledging that desertification, land degradation and drought are problems of a global dimension in that they affect all regions of the world,

Taking note with appreciation of the decision adopted in Sirte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, on 3 July 2009 by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its thirteenth ordinary session, authorizing the African Union to accede to the Convention,

Reaffirming the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation"),[2] in which the Convention is recognized as one of the tools for poverty eradication, and reiterating its resolve to eradicate extreme poverty,

Noting the need for enhanced cooperation among the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,[1] the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change[3] and the Convention on Biological Diversity[4] (the "Rio Conventions"), while respecting their individual mandates,

Welcoming the outcomes of the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development regarding desertification, land degradation and drought,[5]

Concerned by the increasing frequency and severity of dust/sandstorms affecting arid and semi-arid regions and their negative impact on the environment and the economy,

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[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

[2] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

[3] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1771, No. 30822.

[4] Ibid., vol. 1760, No. 30619.

[5] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2009, Supplement No. 9* (E/2009/29).

Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and encourages continuing cooperation in order to promote complementarities in the work of the secretariats, while respecting their independent legal status;

7. *Encourages* actions to promote sustainable management of soil as one means for mitigating the effects of drought in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas;

8. *Invites* Member States and other related organizations to cooperate in sharing information, forecasting and early warning systems related to dust/sandstorms;

9. *Takes note* of the launch of the Global Network of Dryland Research Institutes in Buenos Aires in September 2009 during the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, which aims to promote research, education, training and outreach relevant to the sustainable use of drylands;

10. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Committee on Science and Technology and, in this respect, welcomes the outcome of the first United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Scientific Conference, held in the context of the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention;

11. *Takes note* of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the assessment of the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification[8] as well as the decision of the Conference of the Parties at its ninth session requesting the Bureau of the ninth session, together with the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism and the Executive Secretary, and taking into account the views of other interested relevant entities such as the host countries and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, to undertake and supervise an evaluation of existing and potential reporting, accountability and institutional arrangements for the Global Mechanism and their legal and financial implications, including the possibility of identifying a new institution or organization to house the Global Mechanism, taking into account the scenarios presented in the Joint Inspection Unit assessment of the Global Mechanism and the need to avoid duplication and overlap in the work of the secretariat of the Convention and the Global Mechanism, and further requesting the Bureau to submit to the Conference of the Parties at its tenth session a report on this evaluation for consideration and decision on the issue of reporting, accountability and institutional arrangements for the Global Mechanism;

12. *Requests* all States parties to the Convention to promote awareness among local populations, particularly women, youth and civil society organizations, of, and to include them in, the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan and framework, and encourages affected States parties and donors to take into account the issue of participation of civil society in Convention processes when setting priorities in national development strategies, in conformity, inter alia, with the comprehensive communication strategy adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its ninth session;

13. *Invites* donors to the Global Environment Facility to ensure that the Facility is adequately resourced during the next replenishment period in order to

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[8] See A/64/379.

allow it to allocate sufficient and adequate resources to its six focal areas, in particular its land degradation focal area;

14. *Welcomes* the ongoing efforts of the Executive Secretary of the Convention to continue the administrative renewal and reform of the secretariat and to realign its functions in order to fully implement the relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties and bring those functions into line with the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018);

15. *Decides* to include in the United Nations calendar of conferences and meetings for the biennium 2010-2011 the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies envisaged for the biennium;

16. *Requests* the Secretary-General to make provisions for the sessions of the Conference of the Parties and its subsidiary bodies in his proposal for the programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011;

17. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-fifth session the sub-item entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa";

18. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution, including a report on the implementation of the Convention.